



## State of North Carolina Office of the Governor

---

For Release: **IMMEDIATE**  
Date: December 4, 2007

Contact: Seth Effron  
Phone: 919/733-5612

---

### **GOV. EASLEY WINS APPROVAL OF PLAN TO GET HAY TO DROUGHT-STRICKEN FARMERS**

**RALEIGH** – Gov. Mike Easley today presented a plan that was approved by the Council of State to provide up to \$3.5 million to get hay for drought-stricken farmers who are running out of feed for their cattle and horses. The plan will provide money to purchase hay from other states, transport it to North Carolina in the most efficient way and sell it to farmers at the lowest cost possible.

“We can use the state’s purchasing power to get much-needed hay at the lowest price possible,” Easley said. “This way we can sell it to the state’s farmers, who must be able to feed their 800,000 head of cattle and horses, help them keep farming and avoid selling off their herds.”

The statewide drought left fields dry and farmers without the hay harvests they would normally need to make sure cattle and horses are fed through the winter. It was estimated that the state needs about 100,000 rolls of hay at a cost of about \$30 per roll.

Late this summer hay production was predicted to be 897,000 tons, a 45 percent drop from last year. Many farmers whose corn and soybean crops have been ruined by the drought, are using it for silage and selling it for animal feed.

“The agriculture community is appreciative of the governor seeing the severity of the problem and being willing to act,” said Steve Troxler, state agriculture commissioner, who has been communicating with the governor about the issue.

The Council of State unanimously voted to authorize state Budget Director David McCoy to use up to \$3.5 million to purchase and transport the hay to North Carolina. Easley said he will work with a variety of state and federal agencies, including the state Department of Crime Control and Public Safety and the state’s Department of Agriculture, to find the most cost effective ways to locate the hay and get it to the state, including exploring the use of the National Guard. Farmers would pay the direct costs of the hay, so the state would eventually be reimbursed for its spending.

On Aug. 24, Easley asked the U.S. Department of Agriculture to declare 85 of North Carolina’s 100 counties disaster areas because of a 30 percent or greater loss of at least one significant crop. On Sept. 14, the federal Agriculture Department designated 96 counties, including 11 contiguous to the 85, as disaster areas. The declaration allowed farmers in those counties to apply for low-interest emergency loans.

On Oct. 15, the governor called on the state’s municipal leaders to take the lead in directing citizens to stop using water for any purpose that is not essential to public health and safety so communities can

save their dwindling water supplies and avoid more stringent restrictions. On Oct. 22, he asked citizens across the state to try to cut their normal water use by 50 percent to determine a statewide baseline for conservation.

On Oct. 25, Easley testified before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture about how the drought has affected farmers and agriculture in North Carolina. At the hearing, he told Congress that some crop yields are the lowest in 50 years and many farmers predict that they will not have enough hay to last through the winter.

The governor made the Department of Crime Control and Public Safety's Division of Emergency Management responsible for coordinating all response and recovery activities concerning the drought. Easley also directed Department of Administration Secretary Britt Cobb and Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Bill Ross to coordinate water conservation efforts throughout state government.

###